

Subject/USFW Retiree: Hedgers, Mary
US Fish and Wildlife employee (retired)
August 31, 2004 (#3083104)
Blaine, MN
Interviewed by: Dorothy Norton

D. Norton:

Well Mary, I was happy I was able to find your place, and I did a pretty good job.

M. Hedgers:

Yes.

D. Norton:

A little confused on Ball Street there for a minute, but I found you. I am happy too that you have the time that you could sit down and give me this interview. Well, to start, I am going to ask you where you were born and when?

M. Hedgers:

I was born, actually, in St. Paul in 1942.

D. Norton:

What date?

M. Hedgers:

April 25, 1942.

D. Norton:

Okay. What were your parent's names?

M. Hedgers:

Ann and Al Doyle.

D. Norton:

Okay, and what was their education and what did they do?

M. Hedgers:

My dad could do anything, but he ended up working in Oregon at their newspaper, he was a ... I can't remember exactly what he did but he worked with computers. My mom was a housewife.

D. Norton:

Okay. So where did you spend your early years, all in St. Paul?

M. Hedgers:

Well my early, early years, yes, in St. Paul; and then we moved to Portland, Oregon. I grew up in Portland, Oregon.

D. Norton:

Okay. So, what did you do, how did you spend your early years when you were a kid? Did you ride a bike, go fishing, go fishing, or read books, or play games, or...?

M. Hedgers:

I was a book reader, and went swimming a lot in the summer times, and did what kids normally do, rode bikes, the whole thing?

D. Norton:

Was there a lot of rain in Portland, like they still do?

M. Hedgers:

Yes, but actually it is sort of like we've switched weather with Portland now, they're getting Minnesota weather and we're getting Portland weather; it is cool type of weather with rain, it's the type that Portland gets.

D. Norton:

Well guess what Mary, next year all Fish and Wildlife retiree meeting is going to be in Portland, Oregon!

M. Hedgers:

Is it really?

D. Norton:

Yes, and I will see now too that I have this, I can send you the information as we get it, because I have quite a few people that I do send an email to. Last year it was in Shepherdstown at the Training Center, but so was the Law Enforcement one. Ours was the first part of April, and theirs was the last weekend in April. But this year ours will be in May in Reno, Nevada, and all of them will be in Portland, Oregon in September, and that should be a beautiful time to be in Portland.

M. Hedgers:

Oh yeah.

D. Norton:

Do you still have relatives out there too?

M. Hedgers:

Oh yeah, I have two brothers out there.

D. Norton:

Well good, well maybe you can make the trip out there.

D. Norton:

So, did you ever have a job as a child before you graduated from high school?

M. Hedgers:

Oh, I babysat, and I picked strawberries in Portland, Oregon, and stuff like that.

D. Norton:

Did you ever hunt or fish?

M. Hedgers:

Fish, yes. Hunt, no.

D. Norton:

Okay. So what high school did you go to?

M. Hedgers:

Well, in Portland I went to Jefferson High School.

D. Norton:

When did you graduate?

M. Hedgers:

In 1960.

D. Norton:

Okay, and did you go on to a university?

M. Hedgers:

Yes I did, I did go to college for about a year, but I had to also work, and I found that at the time I didn't realize I was so tired, but I was just so tired, I couldn't handle working and going to school at the same time, and I am a bit of a perfectionist and if I wasn't getting straight "A's" I was unhappy, so... but anyway, then later in life I found out I had lupus, which was really hitting me at that time and I didn't realize it. So, I quit.

D. Norton:

I see. Do you still have that Mary?

M. Hedgers:

Oh yeah, you never get rid of it.

D. Norton:

Oh, it doesn't go away?

M. Hedgers:

Oh, no!

D. Norton:

I don't know anybody who has ever had it, but you always seemed healthy.

M. Hedgers:

You know, they used to say that about my mom, she had it worse than I did, she had lupus very, very bad and she died from it. Her (unclear) would drive her crazy because they would always say, "You look healthy."

D. Norton:

Okay. So you didn't go back to school or college?

M. Hedgers:

I went; I might have accumulated enough points for two or three years. I've always loved education, so I had gone back and forth to college and taken classes and stuff like that.

D. Norton:

But you never got a degree?

M. Hedgers:

No, I never got a degree.

D. Norton:

Did you ever serve in the military service?

M. Hedgers:

No.

D. Norton:

Who do you think influenced your education when you were going to college especially? Were there any teachers or mentors that you felt, or was it your family or..?

M. Hedgers:

My brothers went to college; my dad, although he was not a college graduate, was highly educated and very intelligent. We all did a lot of reading. I just loved to learn, so, I mean it wasn't really a drive to become something as much as to satisfy my curiosity and to learn, and so.

D. Norton:

That's good though. Okay, so when did you meet your husband, and where?

M. Hedgers:

Okay, well that's a long story; being that we're from here, my mom and dad would come back to St. Paul quite often, my Aunt Vernon was here, and my mom and dad were friends with Jim's dad and mom from way back when. So, we would come back here periodically, usually I would come with them, and I would go fishing with Jim, he was sort of a buddy. Then I got married back in Portland, Oregon and never thought of it, and then one day I got a divorce because my husband didn't want to be married anymore. So, at any rate, I started coming back here on my own, and both Jim and I loved to fish, so

we would go fishing together. Then one Christmas he showed up in Oregon and we started getting together, then he went back here, then he called me up two days after he came back here, and he said, "Let's get married!"

D. Norton:

Okay, so then you did get married again?

M. Hedgers:

Yes, I came back here and we got married, and this has been where I've been ever since.

D. Norton:

So, the first time you married in Portland, and then you got married back in St. Paul? Same man twice, huh?

M. Hedgers:

No, no, not the same man.

D. Norton:

Oh, I'm sorry. Okay.

M. Hedgers:

Oh, no, no. The person I was married back in Portland, Oregon I met in Portland, Oregon and everything else like that, but it didn't work. The old saying about marrying your best friend is a really good thing to go by, because Jim and I are really good friends, and so after I got my divorce and then I started coming back here, it worked out!

D. Norton:

That's good, and so do you have any children?

M. Hedgers:

Nope, never had any children.

D. Norton:

Okay. So, that's all the questions I have then personally. Now we'll go over to your career. What was your first federal position, or where you made a wage? Was it with the federal government?

M. Hedgers:

No, my first position was not with the federal government. I worked with JC Penny regional office as a keypunch operator, and then from there I went to the Bureau of Land Management in Portland, Oregon, and there I went into word processing. When I left there, I was the head of the Resource Center, teaching people computer classes and running a bank computers and stuff like that. Then when I came out here, I couldn't find a job in computers, which I really wanted, so I became Matt Kerschbaum's secretary.

D. Norton:

Okay. How did you know about the opening at Fish and Wildlife?

M. Hedgers:

I had gone to where ever you go to apply for federal employment, because I wanted to stay in the federal government at the time.

D. Norton:

So then you started out as a secretary?

M. Hedgers:

As a secretary, yes.

D. Norton:

What grade did you start at?

M. Hedgers:

I think 5.

D. Norton:

Okay. Then where did you go from there? Did you have opportunities for a promotion while you were still working?

M. Hedgers:

Well, then the job in computers came up and I applied for that, and that was after I had been a secretary for two or three years.

D. Norton:

When did you start with Fish and Wildlife then, approximately?

M. Hedgers:

Approximately, it was about 15 years ago.

D. Norton:

Okay. Did you think the pay and benefits were good when you worked for the government?

M. Hedgers:

They were okay.

D. Norton:

When you went into computers for them, was that an opportunity for an advancement?

M. Hedgers:

Yes, I went up to a GS7 I believe, and it was an opportunity for advancement, yes.

D. Norton:

And that was what you still were a 7 when you retired?

M. Hedgers:

Yes.

D. Norton:

Okay. Did you socialize with any of the people that you worked with?

M. Hedgers:

Oh yeah. Amy, who became Matt's secretary when I....

D. Norton:

Who?

M. Hedgers:

Amy, I can't remember her last name.

D. Norton:

Yeah, okay, I know who you mean.

M. Hedgers:

Okay, she died from complications from lupus and cancer. But at any rate, we were good friends, and Mary {McCorkle}, I got a kick out of her. Trying to remember, the girl that originally was Matt's counterpart sat across from me, and then she eventually got a position with the regional director, I can't think of her name. I really liked her, and for some reason her name has just gone from my head. All I remember of her is that her husband developed MS while I was there, and I can't think of her name.

D. Norton:

No, I can't think of it either.

M. Hedgers:

A very, very nice person.

D. Norton:

Dianne Wilds was the regional secretary when I retired, and then Margaret (Keesler) was the deputies... and then, I think I know who you mean, but I can't say her name. I can see her face but I can't say her name, but okay. That's okay, senior moments!

M. Hedgers:

You better believe it!

D. Norton:

So, did you ever do anything; go out in the field for recreation with them like play ball or things like that?

M. Hedgers:

Oh yeah, we went to a couple of refuges where we stayed overnight, and enjoyed that immensely. Rice Lake was one, and yeah...

D. Norton:

So, you just left the service because you were eligible and retired?

M. Hedgers:

Oh no, there was more to it than that. There were some dissatisfaction reasons, and because of my health, I wasn't sure what was going on with my health, but I knew something was wrong.

D. Norton:

So, how many years did you have with the Fish and Wildlife do you think?

M. Hedgers:

With the Fish and Wildlife, it may have been seven.

D. Norton:

But you had other federal?

M. Hedgers:

Yes, right, I had with BLM for 13 years.

D. Norton:

Well, that's good. Okay. So, did you receive any training for your job? So you became Matt Kerschbaum's secretary when you started?

M. Hedgers:

Right.

D. Norton:

Matt just moved off now to the state of Washington.

M. Hedgers:

Oh has he really?

D. Norton:

So I bet he will be at the meeting in September. Did you get any training for the job you had to do when you were working for him?

M. Hedgers:

No, everybody was so busy and rushed and stuff like that, I just floundered for a number of months, and then finally started catching on. Mary tried to help but she was so busy, and so it was, I went home many a night when I got that job crying. Like I said, I'm a bit

of a perfectionist, and like to have a handle on what I'm doing, and I had no handle at all for awhile there, I was like a big old fish floundering.

D. Norton:

So you always worked the regional office, so you worked the regional office hours?

M. Hedges:

Right.

D. Norton:

Yeah, okay. Did you ever see or hear of any new service inventions that you were involved with too?

M. Hedges:

Not that I can think of.

D. Norton:

So you didn't work with the animals at all.

M. Hedges:

No, I would have like to but I didn't.

D. Norton:

How do you think people outside, if you ever told people who you work for, how do you think they felt about the agency? Did they say, "Oh, wow!" or "Gee, what is that?" I know people always thought I worked for the DNR.

M. Hedges:

Yes, primarily if I got any reaction at all, they thought it had something to do with the Game Wardens and stuff like that, they weren't... I think the only other reaction I got was, "Oh you got a plush job because you work for the government, you don't have to do anything!"

D. Norton:

That's what I have always heard that too. So, were you ever involved in any special projects or major issues?

M. Hedges:

I don't know what you mean by a special project, I mean we had the Mingo Job Corp, and also I took on some things that weren't really secretarial because of my computer knowledge and stuff like that, diagramming the refuge system and stuff like that.

D. Norton:

I bet that was interesting for you to do too, and very helpful to Matt I'm sure.

M. Hedgers:

Well, it was helpful to Matt, but his assistant Bill very much appreciated it because it would have fallen on his shoulders if I hadn't taken it.

D. Norton:

Bill Hutchinson?

M. Hedgers:

Hutchinson, yes.

D. Norton:

I've interviewed him.

M. Hedgers:

Oh did you?

D. Norton:

Yes.

M. Hedgers:

I enjoyed working with him. I also would arrange Matt's schedule completely, but I don't know if you call that special, I mean it was just something I took on, where I would even arrange when he would take vacation. He wanted me to do so I did.

D. Norton:

So was Matt your only supervisor that you ever had the whole time you worked there?

M. Hedgers:

No, then when I went and worked with computers, then, I can't think of his name,

D. Norton:

George {Cobic}?

M. Hedgers:

No.

D. Norton:

Who was before George? Let me see...

M. Hedgers:

All I remember is that he took a lot of involvement in remodeling the office; he got into remodeling the whole office. I cannot think of his name, I'm sorry, it's just no there.

D. Norton:

Dale {Given}?

M. Hedgers:

No, no. I can see him, I can picture him in my head, but I cannot think of his name.

D. Norton:

What did he look like?

M. Hedgers:

He was gray haired and average height. His name, I can't think of, it's not there.

D. Norton:

I can't think of either. Not Bryce, Bryce is still working.

M. Hedgers:

No it wasn't Bryce.

D. Norton:

And not Dave Gustafson.

M. Hedgers:

Nope.

D. Norton:

Well, anyway, we can't remember his name. He must have been a great guy, but we can't remember his name! So, he was your supervisor then when you got into the computers.

M. Hedgers:

Yes, right, when I went to the computer section.

D. Norton:

So, do you remember who was president when you were working for Fish and Wildlife or the Secretary of the Interior?

M. Hedgers:

President? You ask some difficult questions here!

D. Norton:

Was it Reagan?

M. Hedgers:

That's who I am thinking it was, Reagan.

D. Norton:

It probably was. Okay, now what was the high point of your career? Going from being a secretary to becoming computer, or?

M. Hedgers:

No, I felt much more appreciated in some ways by my boss when I was a secretary. Umm, I really can't think of anything that was a high point.

D. Norton:

Okay, so did you have a low point in your career?

M. Hedgers:

There was a couple, I don't know if I will make this into a gripe session. But, not the first secretary to the one that was Matt's counterpart but the second one, a very pretty young thing; I would work through my breaks through lunch, come in a half an hour early to an hour, and work half an hour to an hour late to make sure that I got everything done. Like I said, when I left usually, anything and everything that needed to be done was done, plus I took on a lot of extra projects. Matt wasn't one to hand out awards. I felt appreciated and that made me feel good. But, I watched her, this other girl, I watched her take hour breaks, hour and a half lunches, talk to her husband for a couple of hours on the phone, and get away after work. One day she blew up at me, the reason why she blew up at me was because she couldn't understand how I got all of my work done. She got furious at me, she thought I was hiding it, or burying it, or doing something with it, you know. I really didn't say much because, I mean if I would have told her exactly what I thought, and there would have been a strain there. So I didn't say anything, I just kind of looked at her and shrugged and walked away because she was blowing up at me for this, and stuff like that. That irritated me, you know I had really gotten into being that secretary, and I don't think I would have taken the computer job if it hadn't been for that. It was just enough of a nettle under my skin that I just couldn't take it, so I opted out. I got into an even worse situation with the rest of my work there; I wish I would have stayed with Matt. I worked with two people, Deb and Janice, who were college grads, and really looked down on me because I wasn't a college grad and considered me, they did not want their boss to hire me and they made that very, very clear when I got the job that they didn't want their boss to hire me, because I wasn't a professional, I wasn't a college grad. So, I had to fight against them trying, they never allowed me to do things that I was hired to do. Then when my health started going downhill, I thought, "This isn't worth it." That's when I opted out. Like I said, I enjoyed most working for Matt, and he made it very clear he appreciated, and so did Bill, what I was doing, especially after I left the job!

D. Norton:

Did you ever have a dangerous or frightening experience, other than what you just explained?

M. Hedgers:

No, I can't think of anything that would be dangerous.

D. Norton:

Okay. What about the most humorous experience while you working, if there ever was one besides just everyday some cute, little...?

M. Hedgers:

I'm sure there were some humorous incidents, but I really can't think of anything that comes to mind.

D. Norton:

That's okay. What would you like to tell other people about your time with The Fish and Wildlife Service, your career? Like if you meet a neighbor or such and they want to know, "Where did you work, what did you do?" Thinks like that, I mean?

M. Hedgers:

I know that I have said to people, especially people that think that government workers don't work, that there is a strong contingent of people that do a lot of work, and there's also a strong contingent of people who don't! But, there are a lot of people that take their jobs seriously as any professional does, and works hard in the government that I have worked with. So, I try to impart that on them and the fact that what the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is doing, I think that was very important. I've always loved wildlife, and if you look out in my backyard you'll see I have a number of birdfeeders and birdhouses.

D. Norton:

I like the ducks in the bathroom!

M. Hedgers:

And the ducks in the bathroom! But at any rate, I did take pride in it. I valued it more than I did the BLM, I thought the BLM was just a little bit too commercial, and not nature friendly as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is.

D. Norton:

What do you think about the future for the service? Where do you see it heading, do you think it's going to keep going up, or have you heard anything to indicate that maybe it's not going to progress any further?

M. Hedgers:

I truly don't know, I just hope that it keeps doing its work because we do need refuges, we do need somebody out there protecting wildlife and doing things like that. I really haven't heard anything, and as far as projecting the future, I have no idea.

D. Norton:

Okay. Well Mary, that's about the end of the interview then. Is there anybody you think that we should be sure to try and interview if we get a chance? Some people that different ones have mentioned to me haven't been on the list, and so I do go interview them anyway and then I send them in, and then I add them to these lists.

M. Hedgers:

If I can think of that girl's name that used to work next to me before the other one came in. She was fairly attractive, she was not short. She might have not been the actual secretary to the big boss, but the job that she got was within the director's office.

D. Norton:

It wouldn't have been Bev {Levine} would it?

M. Hedgers:

No. I would say she was in her 30s when I left, or might have just hit 30. I know her husband developed multiple sclerosis. I cannot think of her name.

D. Norton:

Well, if you ever think of it, jot it down and then let me know.

M. Hedgers:

She was a very forward thinking, hard working, a nice person.

D. Norton:

Well, thanks again, it was very nice of you.

Note: Names in brackets { } = unverified spelling

Key Words: Mary Hedgers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Shepherdstown Training Center; Bureau of Land Management, Portland, Oregon; Matt Kerschbaum, Mary McCorkle, Dianne Wilds, BLM, Mingo Job Corp, Bill Hutchinson, Dave Gustafson,